

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8289
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 08371

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GW, PFOR
SUBJECT: THE TRAVELS OF FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER'S EXTENSIVE
TRAVELS ARE BECOMING AN INCREASING OBSTACLE TO THE
FORMULATION OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER RECEIVED A BAD PRESS IN
THE FRG FOR HIS RECENT TRIP TO ASIA. HE WAS ACCUSED OF
SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME TRAVELING AND SPENDING NOT
ENOUGH TIME IN EACH ONE OF HIS STOPS IN FOREIGN
CAPITALS. THE SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, FOR EXAMPLE,
POINTEDLY NOTED IN AN ARTICLE FILED FROM INDIA AND
ENTITLED, "WHERE THE THIRD WORLD BECOMES AN ELECTION
DISTRICT," THAT THE INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER STATED IN
HIS TOAST TO GENSCHER AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN NEW
DELHI THAT GENSCHER MIGHT HAVE SPENT MORE THAN 36 HOURS
IN THAT CAPITAL. GENSCHER WAS THE FIRST WESTERN STATES-
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MAN TO VISIT INDIA AFTER THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT. HE
WAS FOLLOWED BY GROMYKO, WHO STAYED LONGER. GENSCHER'S
SHORT VISIT SUFFERED IN COMPARISON.

2. DIE ZEIT, AFTER TRACING THE SCHEDULE OF THE
PERIPATETIC FOREIGN MINISTER, ASKED RHETORICALLY, "CAN
A FOREIGN MINISTER WHO SPENDS SO MUCH TIME TRAVELING

MAKE AN EFFECTIVE FOREIGN POLICY? HERE ONE DAY, TWO CONVERSATIONS, SIGNING AN AGREEMENT; THERE ANOTHER DAY, THREE CONVERSATIONS, TWO SIGNATURES, LIVING WITH A TELEPHONE IN HIS HAND. CAN HE DIRECT THE FOREIGN OFFICE? HAS HE TIME TO THINK THROUGH CONCEPTS? OVER ONE CONCEPT? THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS REMAIN WITH NO ANSWER: EASTERN POLICY, NORTH-SOUTH POLICY, AND MBFR."

3. THAT GENSCHER TRAVELS A LOT IS NOT NEWS. GIVEN HIS LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHEN HE ASSUMED OFFICE IN 1974, GENSCHER APPARENTLY WAS DRIVEN BY DESIRE TO GAIN INSTANT EXPERTISE THROUGH VISITS TO FOREIGN CAPITALS AND DIRECT EXPOSURE TO FOREIGN LEADERS. THIS DESIRE TRANSLATED INTO A HEAVY SCHEDULE BOTH OF FOREIGN TRAVEL AND OF RECEIVING FOREIGN DIGNITARIES IN BONN.

4. HOWEVER, HIS SCHEDULE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY HEAVY AND MANY OF OUR SOURCES IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAVE VOICED CONCERN -- EVEN DISMAY -- OVER THEIR INABILITY TO GET HIS ATTENTION FOR SUSTAINED PERIODS OF TIME. AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FDP, AS WELL AS FOREIGN MINISTER, GENSCHER HAS TWO ROLES TO PLAY. EVER SINCE THE LAST FEDERAL ELECTIONS, IN WHICH THE FDP SLIPPED TOWARD THE FIVE PERCENT BARRIER, GENSCHER HAS FELT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO SPEND EVEN MORE TIME ON PARTY AFFAIRS. THIS HAS INCREASED THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE OF GETTING HIM TO FOCUS ON PROBLEMS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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CONCEPTS.

5. THE BREVITY OF GENSCHER'S STAYS IN FOREIGN CAPITALS THREATENS TO BECOME AN ISSUE WITH THE COUNTRIES HE VISITS. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WAS NOT PLEASED BY GENSCHER'S SHORT STAY IN NEW DEHLI. THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS ALSO COMPLAINED WHEN HE VISITED THREE CAPITALS IN FOUR WORKING DAYS IN FEBRUARY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT WAS NOT PLEASED WHEN HE CUT SHORT HIS VISIT TO SPAIN IN MARCH BECAUSE OF THE "BUGGING AFFAIR" IN WHICH ONE OF THE FDP MINISTERS WAS INVOLVED. OF ALL THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS, GENSCHER HAS THE WORST RECORD OF CUTTING SHORT HIS MANY MEETINGS WITH HIS EC COUNTERPARTS. AS ONE SOURCE REMARKED TO US, "HE IS THE TERROR OF PROTOCOL OFFICERS THROUGHOUT THE EC BECAUSE HE ALWAYS MISSES SOCIAL AFFAIRS CONNECTED WITH EC MEETINGS. WE JUST HOPE THE OTHER MINISTERS UNDERSTAND."

6. BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EC, THERE SEEMS TO

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BE A GENERAL ACCEPTANCE BY THE GERMAN PRESS AND PUBLIC
OF THE NEED FOR GENSCHER'S MANY TRAVELS TO EITHER
BRUSSELS OR THE CAPITAL OF THE EC PRESIDENCY.
SIMILARLY, THERE WAS NO CRITICISM OF HIS QUICK VISIT TO
WASHINGTON IN MARCH AND THERE WILL BE NONE IF HE
ACCOMPANIES SCHMIDT IN JULY. IT IS ALSO ACCEPTED THAT
HE MUST TRAVEL FREQUENTLY TO EASTERN EUROPE, BOTH FOR
THE SUBSTANCE OF THE POLICY AND IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN
BOTH AN FDP AND FOREIGN OFFICE PRESENCE IN AN AREA IN
WHICH THE SPD AS A PARTY IS VERY ACTIVE'

7. WHAT DOES ATTRACT CRITICISM ARE THE TRIPS OUTSIDE
OF THE ATLANTIC AREA AND EUROPE TO FAR OFF PLACES
WHERE THE GERMAN INTERESTS ARE NOT AS STRONG.
INFORMED OBSERVERS, FOR EXAMPLE, CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY
GENSCHER INTENDS TO ACCOMPANY SCHEEL TO MEXICO
IN JUNE. DOES HE REALLY HAVE TO VISIT ZAIRE AND GABON
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IN MAY? TUNISIA AND MOROCCO NEXT FALL? IT IS ALSO INCREASINGLY OBVIOUS THAT GENSCHER IS USING HIS TRIPS AS FOREIGN MINISTER FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. IT IS ONE WAY TO STAY ON THE FRONT PAGE. THE LARGE PRESS CONTINGENT WHICH ACCOMPANIES GENSCHER IS EVIDENCE OF HIS INTEREST IN THIS ASPECT OF FOREIGN TRAVEL. TAKING KEY INDUSTRIALISTS ALONG TO MEET THE PRESIDENT OF THIS COUNTRY OR THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF ANOTHER CAN REDOUND TO HIS BENEFIT.

8. ONE OF GENSCHER'S AIDES HAS TOLD US THAT GENSCHER IS SPENDING NO TIME ON DEVELOPING FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPTS. THIS AIDE IS SO DISCOURAGED THAT HE IS SEEKING A TRANSFER. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN TOLD THAT SCHMIDT IS INCREASINGLY DISTURBED OVER GENSCHER'S TRAVELS AND CORRESPONDING LACK OF DIRECTION OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT ANOTHER AIDE CLOSE TO GENSCHER RECOGNIZES THE PROBLEM AND IS TRYING TO CONVINCE GENSCHER OF THE NEED TO CURB HIS TRAVELS.

9. WHY DOES HE TRAVEL SO MUCH? ONE REASON IS THAT IT SUITS HIS PERSONAL WORK STYLE. A VERY CAPABLE MAN, GENSCHER LIKES TO MOVE QUICKLY FROM ONE SUBJECT TO ANOTHER, EVEN FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER. ANOTHER, IS THAT GENSCHER IS AN ACCOMPLISHED POLITICIAN. AS SUCH, HE PLACES A HIGH VALUE ON PERSONAL PERSUASION THROUGH FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT. FINALLY, GENSCHER HAS ALWAYS HAD TROUBLE FINDING HIS PLACE IN THE SUN OUT OF THE SHADOW OF HELMUT SCHMIDT. ONE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IS TO TRAVEL SEPARATELY FROM SCHMIDT (WHO HIMSELF DOES NOT SHRINK FROM THE SPOTLIGHT), PREFERABLY IN A COUNTRY WHERE A VISIT BY THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER IS NOVEL AND NEWSWORTHY.

10. WHILE WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE THAT GENSCHER WILL DRASTICALLY CHANGE HIS WORK STYLE, WE SEE A BIT OF
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LIGHT ON THE HORIZON IN THE PROMOTION OF VAN WELL TO STATE SECRETARY. GENSCHER HAS CONFIDENCE IN VAN WELL AND WILL DELEGATE MORE RESPONSIBILITY TO HIM THAN HE EVER DELEGATED TO GEHLHOFF. WHILE VAN WELL WILL NOT HAVE THE AUTHORITY OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HIS PRESENCE IN THE FRONT OFFICE COULD CONTRIBUTE TOWARD DEVELOPMENT OF A COHESIVE, CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE ISSUES WHICH THE FRG FACES.

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